

HUR OPERATIONS IN SIND

MARTIAL LAW—1942

Maj Gen (Retd.) Wisal Mohammad Khan

III

In order to restrict the operations of the troops the Hurs started closing up a large number of wells leaving only a few in tact for their own use. The force retaliated by destroying most of the wells left in tact by the rebels thus causing considerable hardships to the people in the area and their cattle as they were left with no sources of water to drink. The Hurs were capable of moving fast in desert area and therefore to equal their mobility the troops were allocated camels. The snag was that the mounted troops could operate only in areas where drinking water was available whereas in other areas we had to depend on the Air Force.

The air reconnaissance was stepped up, huts and hamlets were destroyed by incendiary bombs and the Hurs, moving from well to well, were machine gunned from the air. To shatter their morale the Hyderabad Brigade was allotted the task of destruction of Pir Jo Goth, the palace of the Pir Pagaro. For the said purpose Hyderabad Brigade Head Quarters with a large number of troops including Engineers were employed in area called Kingri. The purpose of this operation was to:—

- a. humiliate the Pir and thus lower him in the esteem of his followers.
- b. incite the Fakirs and Ghazis to avenge the disgrace inflicted on the Pir by launching large scale attacks on the troops.
- c. Display government authority in the area.

All the routes to the house were sealed so as to restrict large scale Hur movement in the area. The palace was inside a fortress and had its own mosque connected with the building. To avoid damage to the shrine the link between the house and the mosque was dismantled by manual labour and then the palace was destroyed by the use of explosives. The photographs pasted below clearly show the various phases of demolition work.

The operation failed to produce the desired results as the Hurs were far too intelligent to bite at the bait as they thought that the best course for them was to conserve their energies for an appropriate moment and to avoid confrontation with the troops at all cost. Some of the Hurs crossed

over to the states of Rajputana to spend most of their time in re-organisation of their bands. However, as a result of our large scale operations a good number of Ghazis of upper Sind were caught and the remaining mostly fugitives were left behind.

The General ordered a reconnaissance of Jaisalmir state with a view to collecting first hand information about the Hur activities in that area. I had the misfortune to be allotted the task which was very hazardous and entailed a journey of about three hundred miles, in a treacherous terrain, on camel back. On arrival in the state I was forcibly retained as a state guest for three days and then provided with a pretty one eyed camel and hodal to show that I was being accorded a V.I.P. treatment. In fact the walk of the animal was very heavy and gave me pain in the back when I had hardly covered a distance of a mile. I got rid of the animal and borrowed another camel on which I covered the rest of the journey without a mishap. Later I learnt that the intention of the ruler was to knock me out and prevent me from performing my duties as air intruders could not be tolerated by him.

I learnt that the inhabitants of the desert area were extremely poor and their main diet was barks of shrubs and locusts during the breeding season. In certain areas the drinking water available to them was from ponds and it was shared by them with their cattle. I saw a large number of cattle bathing and urinating in the ponds and therefore I guess that the drinking water could not be even very palatable. As the source of drinking water in the Jaisalmir state capital was of this nature, I decided to live on mineral water as I was given the impression that they were produced from the well water of the palace. After the completion of my task I was horrified to learn that the mineral water was also produced from the pond water to the. Thank God that the revelation came after the journey's end and not earlier otherwise I would have rather perished due to thirst.

One day I was asked to meet the Deputy force Commander at 2-30 p.m. at the Hyderabad landing ground. This order was rather queer therefore I started wondering as to what the game was. However, on arrival at the destination I found that Brig. Langlands and Freddie Young were already there. The latter told me that we were there to receive the Pir Pagaro who was being flown from the Central Jail Nagpur. After a few minutes the dignitary arrived and was moved to Hyderabad Jail in a covered wagon, heavily escorted.

He was tried by a General Court Martial and executed on 20 March 1943. As the proceedings of the Court and Pirs burial place were secret therefore I am refraining from commenting on this aspect in spite of my knowledge of the fact that the said classification should have been down graded before the creation of Pakistan or soon after.

Publicity was given to the execution of the Pir and his followers were invited to see his corpse, as shown in the photographs above, but they refused to accept the fact. They believed that he had been heavily doped and exposed to them in an unconscious state, and falsely declared to have been executed. They stated that the fact was evident and therefore could not deceive any one. They felt that the the Pir was being secretly removed to a Jail outside the province therefore he is being declared dead. The Fakirs thought that by this dirty trick they are being deceived and demoralised as the British Government was hard pressed for reinforcement in Europe and Burma could not afford to lock up troops in Sind. As a result of their appreciation they came to the conclusion that they should follow Walpoles policy of masterly inactivity and be contented with minor sabotage activities only. They were convinced that the British forces would be destroyed by the Germans and Japanese hence it would be a folly to attack the troops deployed in Sind.

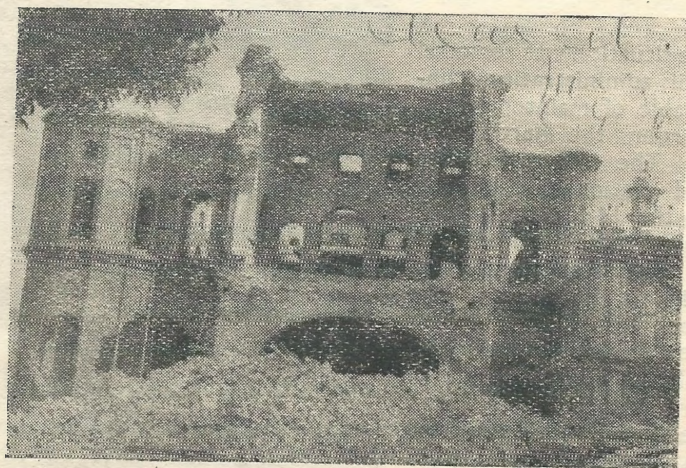
The unshakeable faith of Hurs in the Pir made it abundantly clear that only a living Pir would be able to control them. The burial place of the Pir was kept top secret as it was considered that the dead Pir could become more dangerous than alive. The said information was kept secret even from me but with the assistance of my section I wangled a copy of a memory sketch of the burial area, which is still in my possession. The General recommended to the Government that two sons of the Pir should be educated in United Kingdom for a few years and eventually the elder son, Sikandar Shah, should succeed his father. The said recommendation was accepted and the youngsters were sent abroad for education.

As the situation was restored and the civil administration considered capable of maintenance of law and order the Martial Law was lifted. The troops returned to their old stations and I found my way to the 14 Indian Division where I was employed as an instructor of advanced Jungle warfare. Since then I have always tried to keep myself abreast with the situation in Sind. I value the courage of the brave people of Sind who never reconciled and surrendered to the British rule right from its inception in 1843.





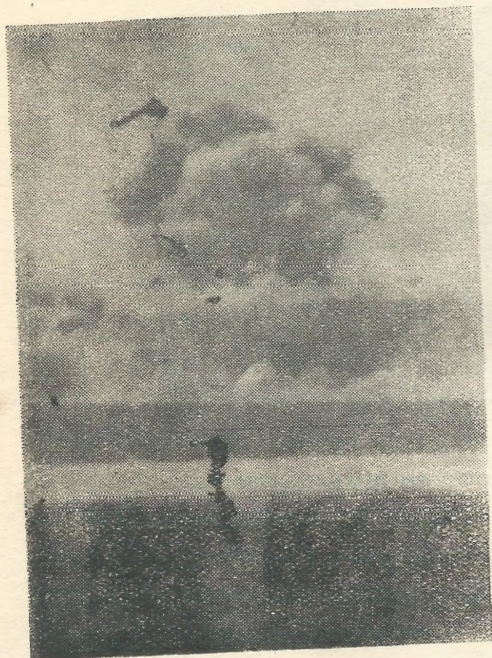
The camel corpse of Martial Law Administration.





After hanging Pir being shown to his selected murids.





Dynamiting, bombarding and razing
of Pir's house and fort.

